UNITED NATIONS **A**

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/74
27 February 1998
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Fifty-third session
Item 113 of the preliminary list*

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 20 February 1998 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement issued on 16 February 1998 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the ninth anniversary of the fatwa issued by the Islamic Republic of Iran against Salman Rushdie.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 113 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) John WESTON
Permanent Representative of the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland to the United Nations

* A/53/50.

ANNEX

[Original: English and French]

Statement issued on 11 February 1998 by the Presidency of the European Union on the ninth anniversary of the Iranian fatwa against Salman Rushdie

On the ninth anniversary of the publication of the fatwa condemning the British author Salman Rushdie to death and calling for his assassination, the European Union recalls and repeats the affirmations it has made on previous anniversaries of the fatwa, in particular, that the fatwa remained null and void because it violated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the principle of the sovereignty of States, which have responsibility for the protection of their nationals.

The European Union also expresses its grave concern over the continuing threats to the lives of individuals associated with the work of Salman Rushdie.

Recalling previous resolutions of the Council of Europe, the European Union calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to abide by international law and urges the Iranian authorities to work with the Union to find a satisfactory solution in respect of Salman Rushdie.

The European Union welcomes the new Iranian Government's stated commitment to respect the rule of law and its emphasis upon the need for a dialogue of civilizations. The European Union hopes that this will take us towards the assurances that we need to remove the threat to Salman Rushdie's life.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated country Cyprus and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.